

# TRANS\*ACTION

The newsletter of the North Dakota Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan (SSTP)  
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**AUGUST 2001**

## **BNSF, state agree to raise Devils Lake tracks**

*From a news release issued by Gov. John Hoeven on Aug. 30*

North Dakota has entered into an agreement with Burlington Northern and Santa Fe Railway Co. (BNSF) to raise the rail bed up to three feet in the Devils Lake area to mitigate the effects of repeated flooding. The tracks, which also support Amtrak passenger service, connect Devils Lake, Grand Forks, Fargo, Minot and Rugby.

The agreement is part of the state's flood-control strategy, which includes protecting North Dakota's transportation system. Securing passenger and commercial rail service throughout the state is an important component of the plan, Hoeven said.

Other components of the plan include construction of an outlet at Devils Lake and establishing a shared right-of-way with Highway 2.

"Reliable rail service and a solid transportation system are vital to consumers and businesses throughout North Dakota. The BNSF line is a link not only within the state, but also regionally between major markets in Chicago and Seattle. It's essential that we keep this vital artery healthy if we're going to serve our people and achieve our economic development goals," Hoeven said.

Under the agreement, BNSF will assume up to \$1.3 million of the estimated \$1.8 million cost of the project, according to Hoeven, with the remainder provided by the state and municipalities. The state will assume \$410,000 of the expense. The city of Devils Lake will contribute \$15,000; Rugby, \$10,000; Minot, \$15,000; Grand Forks, \$25,000; and Fargo, \$25,000.

## **Transit funding for ND reaches all-time high**

*Bill Weimer, NDDOT*

Federal and state aid for public transit reached an all-time high of \$8 million for FY 2001. This funding provides grants to 36 local transit projects to help support their daily service operations and will also purchase about 45 new replacement or expansion buses and vans.

All cities share available transit funding. Three of the state's 13 major cities have fixed-route, city-wide bus service: Fargo, Grand Forks, and Minot. The other 10 cities (including Bismarck) have various levels of service aimed primarily at elderly people and people with disabilities. All transit services are available to the general public, but elderly and disabled people are the main users and beneficiaries of the services.

Rural county transit projects also share in the funding. Nearly all counties have some level of rural county-wide transit service that provides daily, weekly, or monthly trips between small cities and connects to the nearest major city.

Federal transit funding to ND began in 1975, and state aid started in 1990. ND transit services provide more than 1.6 million rides per year.

## **UND survey will show what the public wants**

NDDOT has contracted with UND's Bureau of Governmental Affairs to survey North Dakotans about their transportation needs. The statistically accurate survey of 600 people should be complete by September 30.

"The main thing I hope to learn from responses is what level of customer service the public expects," said NDDOT Director Dave Sprynczynatyk. "As all of us create the Statewide Strategic Transportation Plan, it makes sense to spend a lot of time and energy on transportation services that the public cares about."

## Railway drill will test hazmat responses

*Laura Baenen, Canadian Pacific Railway*

A mock train derailment will "injure" two Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) crew members, spill 200 gallons of diesel fuel into the Mouse River, and leak molten sulfur and phosphoric acid at 10 a.m. Sept. 7 near downtown Minot.

In addition, a small fire will start near a rail car of molten sulfur, and a car carrying a mixed load of hazardous materials will be damaged.

Local officials will evaluate cooperation between jurisdictions and contractors who respond to the scripted drill. Participants will include local police, fire, media, hospital, ambulance service personnel, the Ward County Sheriff's Department, the ND Highway Patrol, a rural fire department, Minot Air Force Base, and Earthmovers, Inc., CPR's local emergency response contractor.

On Oct. 6, a second drill will take place at Enderlin.

## Minot installs video vehicle detection

*Jeffrey Rodacker, Minot Traffic Engineer*

Minot recently installed video vehicle detection at three signalized intersections.

Video detection is a slightly-more-expensive alternative to in-pavement loop traffic detectors. The city feels that the flexibility and ease of operation video detection provides are well worth the extra cost.

The first installation was a single camera installed at an existing pre-timed signal to detect a left-turn lane. The lane is located on a bridge approach that uses rebar and steel, making conventional loop installation impossible. Because the signal is pre-timed, a percentage of the cycle time had to be allocated to the left-turn phase regardless of whether there was any left-turn traffic.

By using the camera to actuate the left-turn phase, the city was able to limit the phase length to only the time needed to clear existing traffic. Video detection also allows skipping the left-turn phase if there are only one or two cars in the turn lane.

This unit cost about \$8,000 and paid for itself in three months by reducing delay and congestion.

The second and third video vehicle-detection systems were installed as part of new traffic signal construction. Both new signals are completely controlled by video, which allows them to operate more efficiently. The city has reduced vehicle passage times by placing detector zones strategically in the approach lanes and sizing them appropriately. Each detector zone can be programmed separately to delay and extend, detect only on specific phase intervals, and detect in only one direction. In addition, the city can place detector zones on top of detector zones to do traffic counting and speed studies and to create system detectors. These two complete video intersection installations cost about \$25,000 each.

Other advantages to using video vehicle-detection systems:

- Improved ability to troubleshoot and make changes from the traffic engineer's office. Video is transmitted back to the office over a standard telephone line.
- Improved ability maintain efficient traffic operation throughout the year. If a loop detector fails during the winter months, it can't be replaced until spring. No component of the video system is underground, so winter repairs are as simple as summer repairs.
- Improved ability to adjust the detector scheme during construction, lane closures, and other interruptions to normal traffic.

*The city of Minot plans to add more video detectors in the near future. For more information, contact Jeffrey Rodacker, Minot Traffic Engineer, 857-4111, [rodacker@web.ci.minot.nd.us](mailto:rodacker@web.ci.minot.nd.us).*

## Aviation news

**A UNITED EXPRESS AIRLINES** pilots' settlement Aug. 12 averted a strike by Air Wisconsin, a regional carrier under United Express service. The carrier provides direct service from Bismarck and Fargo to Denver with 50-seat regional jets and 32-seat Dornier turbo jets. Air Wisconsin expects to carry four million passengers this year from 42 cities.

**GREAT LAKES AVIATION** reported a 54 percent load factor in July, with an average one-way ticket price of \$97.33 in its 55 airports in 15 states. They offer connecting service to Denver and Chicago hubs. The four regional cities of Devils Lake, Jamestown, Dickinson, and Williston are serviced by Great Lakes with joint fares with major carriers. The carrier is repainting aircraft and using new logos.

**FARGO AIRPORT APPRECIATION.** The Fargo Municipal Airport Authority hosted an airline and air cargo tenant appreciation after-hours social Aug. 10. More than 200 airline managers, congressional representatives, community leaders, and business flyers attended. The event was planned to thank carriers for the commitment to service Fargo.

**JAMESTOWN AIRPORT DEDICATION.** On Aug. 24-25, the Jamestown Airport hosted an air show and airport dedication.

**DICKINSON TERMINAL DEDICATION.** A new airline passenger terminal was dedicated Aug. 20 at the Dickinson Airport. Congressional and community officials toured the new western-style passenger facility. Great Lakes Airlines provides daily service to Denver and Williston.

## Border-crossing study results in alliances

A number of state, federal, and provincial agencies are interested in the results of a recently-completed border-crossing study that included North Dakota, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, the US 52 Association, and the Red River Trade Corridor.

Consultant KPMG performed the \$250,000 study funded by federal, local, and private grant monies.

One significant results of the study is that at the Pembina-Emerson and Portal-North Portal border crossings, alliances have been established to improve the facilities, regulations, and exchange of information.

The core agencies in the alliance are the U.S. Customs Service, U.S. Immigration Service, Canada Customs and Revenue, and Citizenship and Immigration Canada. The alliance provides an opportunity to coordinate federal border-crossing infrastructure and service needs with those of state and provincial DOTs providing the connecting transportation (both rail and highway) infrastructure.

## SSTP progress report

### SPREADING THE WORD ABOUT THE SSTP.

- **Aug. 8-10:** Introduced SSTP concept to North Dakota's 3 **Municipal Planning Organizations (MPOs)**
- **Aug. 16:** One-day ne-day workshop in Fargo to walk the state's three **MPOs** through the issue identification process used at the Director's Forum in June.
- **August:** NDDOT staff have begun meeting with selected businesses, including TelPro and MinnDak Growers in Grand Forks and W.E. Wylie, Roman Meal, Yellow Freight, and Northern Improvement in Fargo.
- **Sept. 5:** NDDOT Director Dave Sprynczynatyk and Norlyn Schmidt, NDDOT planner, will talk to tribal leaders at the **United Tribes International Powwow**
- NDDOT's Ron LeClerc will talk to the **ND Motor Carriers Association** about the SSTP.
- **Sept. 29:** NDDOT Director Dave Sprynczynatyk and Gene Griffin, director of the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, will talk with the **ND League of Cities**
- **Oct. 4:** NDDOT will attend a **regional meeting of the Association of Counties** in LaMoure.
- **Oct. 8:** NDDOT Director Dave Sprynczynatyk and NDDOT planners Jack Olson and Ron LeClerc will attend the **Association of Counties' Annual Training Conference**

**TECHNICAL TEAM MEETING.** On July 20, NDDOT staff met with the SSTP Technical Team to present an overview of the SSTP planning process, answer questions, and solicit the team's help in creating transportation topic papers, which will be mailed to all participants of the Director's Task Force, Director's Forum, and Technical Team. (The topic papers will also be available electronically.) Papers on two or three issues will be mailed approximately every two weeks, with the first batch going into the mail about Sept. 6. Papers will address many of the following topics:

- Broad transportation roles and responsibilities of government and major private sector entities
- Synopsis of innovative techniques for financing transportation improvements
- Revenue and finance
- Tourism
- Trade and transportation
- Tribal transportation
- Macro transportation trends
- Aeronautics overview
- Transit overview
- State highway overview
- Local road overview
- Railroad overview
- Intermodal/intramodal transportation

- Demographics
- Shifts in agriculture
- Special-needs transportation
- Disaster emergency services
- Manufacturing and value-added processing

## Top issues from June Transportation Forum

Fifty representatives of transportation interests met June 27-28 in Mandan at the first Director's Transportation Forum. Facilitator Bruce Briggs, Fargo, led the group in a two-day process to determine which issues were important to the groups represented. Here's a very brief summary of the results. For more detailed information, contact Jack Olson, NDDOT, [jolson@state.nd.us](mailto:jolson@state.nd.us), (701) 328-1029.

### AIR ISSUES

- NEED: Regional air hubs
- NEED: Greater public awareness and safety
- NEED: Increased public/private airport funding
- NEED: Uniform, technology-based, statewide air personnel training and certification program

### HIGHWAY ISSUES

- NEED: Personal and freight mobility
- NEED: Economic competitiveness (system management and corridor concepts)
- NEED: Greater safety (design, enforcement, and education)
- NEED: a shared vision
- NEED: Expanded resource base

### RAILROAD ISSUES

- NEED: Stabilized branch lines
- NEED: Attracting value-added processing plants
- NEED: Better coordination among modes and between agencies and the rail industry
- NEED: Competitive freight rates
- NEED: More access to branch lines
- NEED: Intermodal infrastructure to increase North Dakota's competitiveness.

### TRANSIT ISSUES

- NEED: Continued, increased subsidies (with less match)
- NEED: More qualified transit personnel
- NEED: Improved equipment
- NEED: More service in rural areas
- NEED: Multi-use transit services

### INTERMODAL ISSUES

- NEED: Regional intermodal facility
- NEED: Regional uniformity in truck weights, lengths, times, etc.

- NEED: Statewide public/private transportation-sector partnership
- NEED: Include IT in development of SSTP

## Side Trips

**LONGEST BEAMS IN ND HISTORY.** NDDOT recently installed the longest prestressed concrete beams in the state's history. The 49-foot long, 72-inch wide I-girders, produced by ND Concrete Products, Inc., were installed at the railroad overpass at Gascoyne. The length was necessary because the overpass crossed the railroad tracks at a 30-degree angle.

**69 PERCENT INCREASE.** The total daily truck vehicle miles traveled in North Dakota increased 69 percent between 1990 and 1999. (Source: 1999 ND Traffic Report produced by NDDOT Planning and Programming Division)

### We want your transportation news!

The Trans\*Action newsletter is intended to promote a free flow of information about transportation in North Dakota.

Please send news items to Jane Greer, NDDOT, 701/328-2671, [jgreer@state.nd.us](mailto:jgreer@state.nd.us)